(b) The number of passports issued by the Passport Office in Bangalore during the last three years is as follows :

1994	1995	1996
77646	95672	105905

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Alleged Irregularities by Indian Missions Abroad

345. SHRI PRADEEP BHATTACHARYA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether some cases of lapses in the maintenance of accounts by Indian Missions abroad have come to the notice of Government during the last three years;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether the Government propose to take steps to check misuse of funds by the Indian Missions abroad; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) to (d) Accounts are prepared in our Missions abroad in accordance with laid down rules and regulations and every care is taken to ensure their compliance. These are regularly sent to the Office of the Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of External Affairs, in the form of a cash account every month. Any discrepancy noticed is rectified in the accounts of the following months. These accounts are subject to post-audit in the office of Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of External Affairs and are also audited by Statutory Audit.

[Translation]

Construction and Expansion of Ports

346. SHRI MAHESH KUMAR M. KANODIA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the efforts made at Central level during the last three years for the construction of new ports and expansion of the existing ports;

(b) the names of such ports and works undertaken in Gujarat in this regard; and

(c) the role of Union Government in case the State Government fails to execute its duties and the efforts made by the Union Government during the last three years in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) During the last three years, no new port has been constructed by the Central Government. However, Ennore, a sattellite port of Chennai is being constructed at a cost of Rs. 593.90 crores. The capacity of existing Major Ports has been increased by 7.83 million tonnes during the last three years.

(b) and (c) In Gujarat, Kandla Port Trust is the only Major port developed by the Central Government. The major schemes taken up at Kandla Port during the last three years are—construction of 3rd Oil Jetty, 4th Oil Jetty. 7th General Cargo Berth, 8th Cargo Berth, 2 Nos. Virtual Jetties and a captive jetty by IFFCO. The responsibility for development of Minor Ports rests with the State Governments.

Construction of Bridge on Yamuna

347. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the total amount spent so far for the construction of parallel bridge on Yamuna river near I.T.O. in Delhi;

(b) the date on which the construction work of this bridge had commenced and the date by which it is likely to be completed;

(c) the reasons for delay in completion of this bridge;

(d) whether cost of the construction of this bridge has increased many-fold; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken for early completion of this project ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : The Government of India is primarily responsible for development and maintenance of National Highways in the country and all other roads are essentially the responsibility of concerned State Govts. Construction of parallel bridge across Yamuna river near I.T.O. in Delhi falls within the purview of the Govt. of N.C.T.D.

(a) Rs. 26.50 crores.

(b) Work commenced in December, 1992 and is targetted to be completed by June, 1997.

(c) Main reason for delay in completion were problems relating to removal of encroachments, site problems and technical difficulties encountered during execution and change in scope and design for accommodating water supply pipeline on the bridge.

(d) and (e) The sanctioned cost of the bridge project is Rs. 25.78 crore and likely cost of completion is about Rs. 40 crore. Progress is being closely monitored to ensure completion by the target date.

Visit of Sri Lanka by Foreign Minister

348. SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH :
SHRI A.C. JOS :
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :
SHRI S.D.N.R. WADIYAR :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether he has visited Sri Lanka recently;

(b) if so, the bilateral issues discussed with the leaders and officials of Sri Lanka during his visit;

(c) the outcome of the discussion held indicating the details thereof;

(d) whether Sri Lankan Government had raised the issue of India's mediation to help resolve the ethnic conflict of the Sri Lanka during the visit; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes, Sir. The visit took place from January 19 to 22, 1997 and during this visit, the Third Session of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Commission was convened.

(b) and (c) The two sides had a wide ranging exchange of views on various issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed the high priority that they both attach to maintenance of close and cooperative relations.

During the Joint Commission meeting, both sides agreed to take further measures to consolidate and expand bilateral relations in all fields. An Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of investments was signed during the visit. This agreement would provide a legal framework for facilitating greater flow of two way investments. An agreement was also signed to release the second tranche of the Indian line of credit (US $ 15 million) to second tranche of the Indian line of credit (US $ 15 million) to Sri Lanka. Besides, a Cultural Exchange Programme and a Programme of Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology were also concluded during the Joint Commission meeting. During the visit, it was announced that Government of India had decided to open a Cultural Centre in Colombo. The Government's decision to reduce tariffs and remove quantitative restrictions on substantial number of items of export interest to Sri Lanka was conveyed and it was agreed that details would be worked out during a meeting of officials of the Ministries of Commerce of both countries.

India's serious concern about incidents of violence against Indian fishermen was conveyed to the Sri Lankan leaders and the need to find an appropriate mechanism to avoid such incidents in the future was stressed by the Indian side. Both sides agreed to hold official level talks on fishery issues in the near future. The Sri Lankan Government conveyed that it would release from custody 25 Indian fishermen who had been found in Sri Lankan waters and against whom there were no security related charges.

It was also agreed to hold talks on the need to find a permanent solution to the problems faced by the operators of sailing vessels plying between Tuticorin and Colombo.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Irrigation Facilities in U.P.

349. SHRI D.P. YADAV : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether there are many schemes under consideration of the Government in regard to increasing irrigation facilities in Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, the extent of area of drought prone region which would have been provided irrigation facility by the end of Eighth Five Year Plan; and

(c) the target fixed for Ninth Five Year Plan in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) and (b) Nine new major irrigation projects of Uttar Pradesh are under appraisal. Besides providing irrigation benefits to other areas, these projects envisage irrigation benefits to the drought prone districts of Allahabad, Mirzapur, Hamirpur, Banda and Varanasi.

(c) The Ninth Five Year Plan has not been finalised by the Planning Commission.

[English]

U.P. Roadways Corporation

350. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Uttar Pradesh Roadways Corporation is running into huge financial loss;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the steps being taken by the Government in this regard;

(c) whether the Uttar Pradesh Government owe large sums of money to the Corporation for hiring its buses; and

(d) if so, the amount of money due to the Corporation and by when the same will be paid to the Corporation ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (d) The Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of Lok Sabha.

Mahila Vikas Nigam in Assam

351. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Mahila Vikas Nigam has been constituted in Assam ;

(b) if so, the districts where the units thereof have been formed; and

(c) the works undertakan by the Nigam so far ?